



**For Immediate Release:**  
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## **News Release**

### **Teens Share Stories of Dating Violence**

(Salt Lake City, UT) –In 2009, 8.2% of Utah female high school students said they had been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to, compared to 5.8% of male high school students, according to data from Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). In addition, nearly 11% of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders said they were hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend. Today, two young women shared their stories of the impact abusive dating relationships has had on their lives.

Bonita (last name withheld) was 19 years old when she was raped by a young man who attended her church. “I didn’t tell anyone about it for three years. I felt so worthless, like I was nothing,” she said. “But I’ve learned that I am a powerful person who deserves to be loved and treated with respect. I do not deserve to be belittled, humiliated, or threatened.”

Bonita’s is one of several stories featured in a booklet compiled by the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) that tell the experiences of Utah teenagers who have been in an abusive dating relationship. The booklet will be used by the UDOH and other state and local agencies as a prevention tool to help young people learn how to have healthy and respectful dating relationships.

“Dating violence happens when one person in a relationship repeatedly acts or threatens to act in a way that physically, mentally, verbally, or sexually hurts the other person,” said Katie McMinn, UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “Healthy relationships are based on respect, communication, honesty, and trust. There is no room for fear or violence.”

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“I know that I am not the only person who has gone through this experience. It happens all around us and we never talk about it,” said Bonita. “Never tolerate violence in a relationship. It is never okay. Love doesn’t hit or belittle. Love doesn’t destroy you, it builds you up.”

Help is available for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence by calling a toll-free, 24-hour Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis and Information Hotline at 1-888-421-1100 or the Utah Domestic Violence Link Line at 1-800-897-LINK (5465).

To download a copy of the “Teen Dating Violence: It Happens in Utah” booklet and other dating violence prevention resources, visit

<http://health.utah.gov/vipp/datingviolence/overview.htm>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*